

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections contained in the Office Action of December 3, 2003 is respectfully requested.

The Examiner's indication that the previous response overcomes the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

The Examiner notes that the rejection based on Watanabe et al. better illustrates and explains the process of JP '981. The Examiner then proceeds to reject claims 30-31, 33, 35, 37, 42 and 45-46 as being anticipated by Watanabe et al. The Examiner further proceeds to reject claims 24-28, 32, 36, 39-40 and 47-48 as being unpatentable over Watanabe et al. However, despite the substitution of references relied upon, neither Watanabe et al. nor the prior Japanese reference anticipate or render obvious the present invention as claimed.

In Fig. 6 of Watanabe et al., the bottom-most surface of the loop shaped workpiece is a portion of the loop shaped workpiece at which initial immersion of the workpiece into the transfer liquid is started while urging the transfer film. After the loop shaped workpiece is thus immersed in the transfer liquid to a depth that is shown in Fig. 6 of Watanabe et al., the loop shaped workpiece is then horizontally moved rightward while the loop shaped workpiece is rotated to depress the transfer film.

Independent claim 45 requires that the downwardly immersing comprise moving the loop shaped workpiece along the loop shaped direction in which the workpiece extends at the transfer initiating site so as to continuously immerse the loop shaped workpiece in the transfer liquid while maintaining the attitude of the workpiece to the surface of the transfer liquid the same such that a circumference of a cross section of the loop shaped workpiece, taken in the thickness direction of the loop shaped workpiece, is substantially concurrently contacted with the transfer film at the transfer initiating site.

In the rejection, the Examiner takes the position that the transfer initiating site is the bottom-most surface of the loop shaped workpiece, and thus a cross section of the workpiece taken in the thickness direction is substantially concurrently contacted with the transfer film because the entire workpiece in the thickness direction is submerged in the transfer liquid. However, in Watanabe et

al., after the loop shaped workpiece has been immersed in the transfer liquid to the depth shown in Fig. 6, the loop shaped workpiece is then horizontally moved rightward while the loop shaped workpiece is rotated to depress the transfer film. When it has started to be horizontally moved, the bottom-most surface of the loop shape workpiece is in no way a transfer initiating site, because the bottom-most surface of the loop shaped workpiece is already covered by the transfer film. That is, transfer does not initiate at this site as required by the claim. Accordingly, the bottom-most surface of the loop shaped workpiece of Fig. 6 of Watanabe et al. does not correspond to the transfer initiating site as set forth in claim 45. Claim 45 has been amended above to emphasize this point.

For this reason, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention clearly patentably distinguishes over Watanabe et al. as well the Japanese reference. Indication of such is respectfully requested.

With respect to the Examiner's remaining comments and rejections, Applicant's reserve their right to traverse any and all such positions taken by the Examiner in the Office Action. Further discussion of such is not deemed necessary at this point in view of the above clear distinction between the present invention and Watanabe et al., however.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and the Examiner is requested to pass the case to issue. If the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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